

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

January 2, 2022

Whoever Has The Son Has Life

1 John 5:11-18

Prayer: *Father, I just again, I thank you for allowing us to gather together again, to meet in your name. And again as we meet we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit. We recognize that it's your Spirit who gives us the ability to grapple with and understand and take in your word and to again make it of permanent value. And so we pray for the presence, we pray that you would guide us through this and that it would be of lasting value, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well last week we looked at a very complicated scripture from 1 John. It's the one that we're at. I want to just read it again. This is what we looked at last week. This is 1 John 5:6-10. It says: *This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: The Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that*

he has borne concerning his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.

We basically saw the scripture as a parade of witnesses that John brought to us to testify as to who Jesus was and what it was he accomplished. And we found that there were actually seven different witnesses, some of whom were inanimate, most of whom were highly animated and alive. John tells us the witnesses were first water, which represents John's baptism initiating Christ's public ministry; next was blood, which represented the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and then next was the Spirit of God who descended like a dove on Jesus at his baptism; and that was followed by John the Baptist who actually baptized Jesus and declared, *"This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."* John's witness was followed by God the Father who announced, *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;"* and finally God says it's believers themselves who bear witness to who Jesus is and what he has done because each believer has the Spirit of Christ within them testifying to that very fact. And so we add to those six witnesses the final witness which is Jesus speaking himself, what he told the Pharisees in *John 5: "The very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent*

me."

Well, there you have seven different witnesses to who Jesus is and what it is he's accomplished. And what is unique about this testimony of God's own Son though is the consequence of rejecting it. This is not just a set of facts. As I said last week John says flat out that such people who deny the testimony of these witnesses, they're not neutral at all. They are in God's sight people who have made God out to be a liar. Verse 10 says: *Whoever does not believe God, has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.*

So I say well, why is simple unbelief considered by God to be in essence making him out to be a liar? Well like I said, actually there are seven answers to that why and John touched on six of them, Jesus added the seventh. God is saying with every one of those witnesses bearing witness to who Jesus is and what he does, it's not a simple thing to say, "Nah, I just can't believe that." It is in fact to make God out as a liar and all seven of those testimonies as lies in themselves. As I said, unbelief is not simply an unwillingness to agree to a set of facts. It is in fact a profoundly terrible sin. And John summed it all up by saying in *1 John 5:11: And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life;*

whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

You see, believing God's witness, it's literally a matter of life and death. It says those who have the son have life, those who have not the Son have death itself. And John is saying that all of these witnesses: The water, the blood, and the spirit, John the Baptist, God himself, they're all external, and the testimony that God has given to each of his sheep by placing his Holy Spirit within them, that one is internal. Some people say the witness of that is that you just know that you know that you know that you belong to Christ and his kingdom. And what they mean by that is what John was trying to express when he says, "*Whoever has the son has life.*" I mean you know that you know that you know because you feel the presence of the Holy Spirit within you and you feel it not in your senses, you actually feel it in your spirit itself. The things that please God now begin to please you. You begin to take on the personal likes and desires that Jesus Christ himself had. Your spirit begins to line up and line itself up and aim itself at the kingdom of God. And like I said last week, what *Romans 8:5* says: *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* And I know that

because before I became a believer in Jesus Christ I did exactly what Romans claims, I set my mind on the things of the flesh. I mean, for my generation those things were sex, drugs, and rock and roll and that's what you lived for. I thought nothing about getting high or drunk or engaging in all of those things of the flesh; that was just normal to me. The very idea of living according to the spirit, that seemed to me like a nightmare. That was religion. I mean that was to me, you know, gregorian chants and smokey incense and more rules and regulations that you could possibly count all pointing to a deity that I had no love whatsoever for. In fact the only feeling I had was perhaps a distant fear that he was going to squash me like a bug some time. That's because those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh. So now today as someone who has the Spirit of God living within me, I am witness to a 180-degree flip-flop about the very things that drive me. And trust me, it didn't come from me. The idea of getting drunk or high or engaging in illicit sex is as foreign and repulsive to me as the things of God were when I lived according to the flesh.

And so the next thing that John speaks to about this change is the believer's testimony about prayer. He says this, he says: *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he*

hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

As I was preparing this message I was sitting on my couch which looks outwards towards the end of my driveway and I saw coming down the road the car that my neighbor Bill drives. And so I said to myself -- and it was almost unconscious -- I said, "Lord, grant that Billy could come into your kingdom." Now this is a fellow that I pray for just about every day for many, many years and the few times I've actually gotten near to sharing the gospel with him, he responded by getting very hostile and very upset which is actually unusual for him because he's a very sweet guy. So my prayer for him, it was as natural and as effortless as the fact that I saw him out of my window. Instead of just thinking, "Oh, there's Billy," I was thinking, "Oh Lord, there's Billy who's lost. Please help him to find his way. Please bring him into the kingdom." Well now just as John says because I am confident that I am one of his, I'm also confident that that prayer was heard. John says, *"If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."*

Now there's two different types of hearing in this passage, there's two different types of response. First of all, I know that such a prayer for the salvation of a lost one, I know that's according to God's will, I mean, we have it in God's own words. In *1 Timothy*,

God says: *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* So God tells us it's clearly his will that we pray to make intercession for all people including my neighbor Billy. Well then if we're praying a prayer that's according to God's will, then God says, *"If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us,"* so we can be absolutely confident, I mean, I can be absolutely confident that my prayer for Billy at that very moment was heard by God. Now does that mean that as long as I've checked all the boxes I can be absolutely certain that Billy's going to be saved? Well, no. That's not what God is saying here. See, John is actually talking about having an absolute sense of certainty, number one, that your prayer will be heard.

This is what F.B. Meyer said. He said: *"Believe that God is listening. We need not pray long to know this. Only be quiet and silent before Him, and a blessed sense, induced by the Holy Spirit, will pervade your heart and mind, that you are literally speaking into the ear and heart of your Heavenly Father, who is listening as intently as if He had nothing else to attend to in all the*

universe."

So like I said, I have absolute confidence by the power of God's Spirit of God that my prayer for Billy was heard. John goes on to say in verse 15: *And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.* So if we're praying for something, first of all we know it's the will of God; second, we know that God has heard it. Okay. We've got two of the three conditions down. Therefore we can be certain that our request has been granted.

Listen to how F.B. Meyer puts this. He says: "The third condition is to be sure that the thing we asked is granted. It may not have come to hand, and it may not come in the precise form in which we sought it, but it is ours. We must dare to believe that we have that petition, labelled with our name, consigned to us, perhaps started on its way to us, although it may take years to come." In other words God doesn't ever not answer our prayers. I mean it may be "yes," it may be "no," it may be "wait," but there will always, always be an answer. And when God says "no" or "wait" if God says "no" or "wait" to my prayer for Billy's salvation, it's always because he's got something better planned. It may be a different time frame, it may be a different result than I expected but always I can expect my prayer will receive an answer. Like I said, it may

be "yes," it may be "no," it may be "wait," but it will never, never be ignored. Our problem is that we take "no" or "wait" as God refusing to hear.

Robert J. Morgan points out in an article entitled "When God Says No" that very frequently we interpret "no" the wrong way. He says: "Abraham earnestly prayed that Ishmael would become the son of promise and the heir of his legacy, but God said no. He had something better, a line of descent through the boy Isaac. Moses earnestly prayed to cross the river Jordan with the children of Israel, but God said no. He had a younger leader named Joshua and a better promised land for the aged Moses. David prayed earnestly for the joy of building a temple to the Lord, but God said no. He had something better—for David to plan the project and for his son Solomon to do the work. The healed demonic in Mark 5 prayed that he could travel around as a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, but the Lord said no. He had something better—that he go home to his friends and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him and had shown him mercy. The apostle Paul prayed earnestly to be healed from his disease, which he described as a thorn in the flesh. But God said no. He had something better—for Paul to discover the all-sufficiency of His grace. Jesus prayed earnestly that the cup of suffering would pass from Him, but God said no. He had something better—that a fountain would be opened for all the

world for the forgiveness of sin."

I don't know but have you ever thought about thanking God for the prayers that you've sent up to him for which he said no? I mean I can easily think of a half dozen or so prayers that I was desperate to have God answer that he did answer with a definite no, and I absolutely remember definitely not appreciating that at all at the time. But now, now I can look back on that with great relief and great appreciation.

Well, John now makes a shift. He makes an ominous one towards prayers that we pray for ourselves and prayers that we pray for others. And in this case he directs his attention to a particular prayer for a particular circumstance. This is verse 16. He says: *If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.* Well as you can imagine this is a scripture that has troubled commentators for literally centuries and there's all kinds of responses to it, all kinds of speculation as to what John actually meant. I mean this is the scripture that provides lots of the basis for the Catholic church's teaching on mortal and venial sins, and that's what I was taught as a youngster. I was taught that you could commit as many venial

sins as you dared and your soul would still be alive but one mortal sin would overwhelm all the other sins, wiping out your soul, bringing death with it. I don't think that's what John is getting at. But there is a sense that there is one particular sin that does indeed invite death. And if you remember John spoke about this a few chapters ago when he spoke about antichrists. And back then I said an antichrist is someone who denies the deity of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' day it was the Gnostics who brought the spirit of the antichrist to the newfound church claiming a secret knowledge that was evaluated only to a select few. Well in our day there's so many different antichrists who either suddenly or blatantly deny the deity of Christ that you truly need to have discernment to understand who is who, but it all comes down to how they understand Jesus.

As you know we have many and profound differences with Roman Catholics. I mean, we also have differences with Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, but they're two different orders of magnitude of difference. We have lots of issues that still divide Protestants and Catholics but both groups believe that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. Well both Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons reject that idea. Those two groups are classically antichrists and that even though they speak frequently about Jesus in glowing terms, they both deny his deity. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that

Jesus was the highest created being but nonetheless they still believe he was created by God and is not God. And Mormons believe that Jesus was at one point a mere man who elevated himself to God-like status as we can if we follow Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism.

So denying the deity of Jesus Christ is the first order of business for antichrists. John then links this denial of Christ to everyone who abandons the faith. This is what he said back in *1 John 2:18*. He said: *Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.*

So those who actively deny Christ are antichrists, small A, plural. Today we have a special term to describe them and that same process of going out, we call that term "deconstruction." You know if you think about house as a construction project, then the process of deconstructing it would be starting from the roof, working your way down through the roof trusses to the rafters to the studs and the sheathing, every single phase of it would involve the methodical taking apart of a building. Well deconstruction of Christianity

involves the same type of process. I mean at some point people who thought they believed in Christ begin to question what it is they believe. That in itself is perfectly legitimate, I mean, John says in *1 John 4:1: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* But you see, testing the spirit also means testing one's motivation as well. You may be tempted to leave the faith not so much as a matter of truth alone but rather over LGBTQ influences or politics or culture or any number of different reasons. I mean the roof of this faith building that you're deconstructing might be evolution. The rafters might be the God of the Old Testament, the stud walls might be the atonement or the historical evidence of Jesus and the resurrection. The point is a deconstructionist is someone who at some point in the process decides that this building is no longer holding up. The faith house has collapsed.

There's now thousands and thousands of young people who have determined that in their view the house of evangelical faith is no longer standing. What's truly sad to see is the evidence that drives so many of these deconstructions. It's not hard and fast facts that have suddenly arisen to disprove the truths of the gospel, it's far more hard and fast attitudes toward an evangelical and biblical culture that's now seen as rigid, as uncaring and

unbending, as uncaring and unloving towards LGBTQ individuals or anti feminists or having an uncomfortably right lean when it comes to politics. And there are many who make the argument that there was so much wrong with evangelicalism between the prosperity gospel and the failed morals of many evangelical leaders that it was inevitable that people would become fed up with its moral shortcomings. And by and large much of the exiting done by deconverters has to do not only with their discomfort with evangelical culture but also with their unhappiness with the actual claims of the Bible. From the belief in the exclusivity of the gospel to the belief in a literal eternal hell, if you add to that the demands of biblical sexual ethics and you have lots and lots of people claiming this is not what I signed up for. Part of that comes from the church's failure to lay out clearly what it believes, to give a clear biblical teaching on what the Bible teaches. And so now we have "ex-vangelicals" which is obviously ex evangelical, we have "nones" which are not a group of religious women but people who checked off the "none" box when it comes to any religious affiliation, you have a whole lot of ex-Christians who now feel it's their duty to lead fellow Christians out of the faith.

So remember John's letter. It was written in a similar time when the church was surrounded by antichrists pushing a gnostic gospel

that denied that Jesus was God. And John saw them clearly as apostates, and that's why he said: *They were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.* John clearly saw them as non-believers, as those who had revealed themselves to be antichrists headed to hell itself and so he saw them as sinning unto death. And he said: *There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.*

Okay. He's raising a very interesting question, I mean, how do we know how to pray for someone who is deconstructing? I mean how far do you have to go before you're considered among those who have gone out from among us who are sinning unto death? Well, let me illustrate this by pointing out some examples about folks who are not in this category.

I happen to know in this last year, I personally know one couple who left Christianity to embrace contemporary Judaism, a contemporary Judaism that rejects Jesus whole-heartedly as Messiah. I also recently heard of another couple left a solid evangelical church in order to become Jehovah's Witnesses. Now the question is have they committed a sin unto death and the answer is not yet. Do we pray for these folks? Absolutely. God is quite capable of reigning them in and bringing them back. However if either of

those couples decided that they wanted to infiltrate the church and lure people out to their position, they would be taking on the very same type of role that John saw as attacking his church and there would be a point beyond which there appears to be no going back. Listen to what *Hebrews 10:26* says. It says: *For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.*

Well what type of people are we talking about here? I mean these are not people who have struggled and who have walked away from the faith. People like that desperately need our prayer. We are talking about people who have now actively become adversaries of the church, people like Rhett and Link that I spoke of the last time. These are two ex-Christians who used to be missionaries for Campus Crusade. They're the ones who have parlayed their de-conversion into a podcast that has over seven billion with a "B," seven billion views. They have 17 million subscribers. I mean they're largely just entertainers now, having left their Christian lives far behind but they still spend a good deal of their time encouraging people to reject the gospel they used to proclaim. I mean as recently as spring of this year they revisited approvingly their de-conversion. I believe that's about as close

as you can come to sinning the sin of death.

John draws an active distinction between two different types of sin. He says: *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.* What John is saying here is that all of us sin but the sins most of us sin are not those that lead to death. John goes on to say: *"Everyone who is born of God does not keep on sinning,"* not meaning that we all become sinless eventually but that every born again believer who has the Spirit of Christ within him cannot successfully embrace habitual sin. The more you engage in habitual sin, the more you're going to find yourself engaging in an internal war between your spirit that is your flesh and the Spirit of God who is now alive inside you. Think of David. Think of David when he went through that horrible period of time of committing adultery and murder. He tried to ignore it, he tried to just kind of push on. He remarked that when he tried to maintain that kind of habitual sin there was actually a war going on inside him between his flesh, his spirit and the Spirit of God. This is what he said in *Psalm 32*. He said: *Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night*

your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

You see, the difference between David's sin which was grotesque and evil and habitual and the sins of those who have sinned unto death is that David was chosen of God and God simply would not let him go. Listen to how John puts this. This is *1 John 5:17*. He says: *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.* He who was born of God is literally the spirit of Christ. That's the Spirit of Christ protecting his sheep so that the evil one can't touch them. As I said before what John was saying is exactly what Jesus proclaimed when he spoke of what we call the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Jesus said that anyone who is fully converted will stay converted for his entire lifetime for one reason and one reason only, it's because they didn't do the converting. Jesus did.

Jesus makes that clear in a conversation he had with the Pharisees. Again, these are people who witnessed his miracles and his powers and they still utterly rejected him. So Jesus is having this conversation with them and he explains to them why they're rejecting him, why his sheep are accepting him and why his sheep

will remain his sheep for all time. This is what he says in *John 10*. It says: *Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."* So Jesus is explaining to these passionate truth deniers that he's told them the truth quite plainly; they simply lack the ears to hear. It says only his sheep have been given that blessing, I mean, they don't hear his truth because they can't. The sheep on the other hand hear it clearly, they hear it plainly.

So much of what Jesus claims here about his sheep flies in the face of our own understanding of our own personal autonomy. I mean we like to think of ourselves as rugged individuals who make our own choices and decisions and bear our own consequences. What about if God sees this far differently than we do? I mean we see ourselves

as uniquely free individuals. God sees us as sheep belonging exclusively to him because in essence he sees us as redeemed slaves, people who have been bought and paid for at a tremendous price and the price was the blood of his own Son. Listen to how *1 Peter* puts it, he says: *Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

I mean as redeemed slaves we are people who belong lock, stock and barrel to Jesus by virtue of his purchase of us at the cross. I mean do you know if you're one of Jesus' sheep, you have been given to him as a gift from his Father. It was a gift from the Father to the Son. I mean how does it feel to realize that God has chosen to gift you to his Son? That's exactly what Jesus means when he says in verse 29: *"My Father who has given them to me,"* and as I said before "them" is us. Jesus claims that those who believe in him do so because they belong to him. They are his sheep. He also says those who do not belong to him find it impossible to believe in him. Verse 26 he says: *"But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you."* So the Father and the Son, they actually act like they have the right of ownership to every single believer.

Well, what about the Holy Spirit? Well just last week I recalled that conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus. Jesus is telling Nicodemus, *"You must be born again"* and who does Jesus say the power to do that comes from? He says, the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells a completely mystified Nicodemus, he says: *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."* Well, that wind that blows where it wishes is of course the Holy Spirit, and Jesus is clearly stating that the Spirit of God, just like the Father and the Son, doesn't ask permission of us for anything. It just blows where it wishes. And wherever it goes it opens up the eyes, the ears, the heart, and the mind of those to receive the gospel. That's a far cry from the image that many people have of Jesus meekly knocking on the door of our hearts and asking for permission to come in. Once again, you've got to understand that is an image from scripture that has been twisted out of its place to fit a narrative. And the narrative insists that Jesus needs to ask our permission before he can claim us as his own.

If you look at the actual story as it occurs in the book of Revelation, Jesus is not knocking on the door of anybody's heart. Instead he's knocking on the door of a church and he's not particularly happy with this church in the first place. This is

the actual text of the story. This is Revelation 3:14. Jesus says: *"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."* Then He goes on to say, not to a person but to a church: *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."* You see, we confuse God's statement to a church that he's disciplining with his meekly asking us permission to come into our lives.

And it's like I said Jesus' rights to us may well offend our sense of personal autonomy but the whole idea that our personal autonomy reigns supreme, that evaporates the more you look at it. I mean, have you ever asked yourself what kind of control have you ever had over any of the events of your life? Over where, when and how you were even born? I mean how much control did you have over the fact that you were born in the United States? I mean, why not Borneo or China or Siberia? Or how about when you were born? Why were you born in the 20 or 21st century? Why not the first, the third, the 12th, 30th or 50th? Or to whom you were born? Was it royalty, was it peasants, were they criminals, just average people? You had no

say whatsoever in that. You also have no say whatsoever into where, when and how we leave this earth and yet somehow in that brief period of time that we find ourselves existing on this earth we tend to think we're the authors of our existence and in particular of our faith and we're not. We are merely participants in it. Well, who's the author of your faith? Hebrews says: *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.* It's not you, it was Jesus. And God goes on to say very clearly to his sheep that we belong exclusively to him. For many people that's an outrageous claim.

You know, it's interesting that one of the main reasons that folks deconstruct the faith is because of bodily autonomy issues. We don't want God acting like he's the boss of our bodies even though every single breath we breathe is at his pleasure. And again God makes that clear to his sheep when he says in *1 Corinthians 6*: *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.* There's God telling believers in Jesus Christ they're not their own, they've been purchased at the price of Jesus' blood, that they're his sheep and that the reason why they believe is because they were gifted to Jesus from the Father and chosen by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

as the redeemed to be shaped and molded into the very image of Christ for the glory of God. And no one, no one asked your permission. It says Jesus said to his disciples in *John 15*: "*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.*" And so because Jesus has chosen us, he is fully and absolutely committed to protecting what belongs to him.

And so you have John telling us in our text this morning: *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.* If you could only begin to grasp how precious a gift it is you have received if you are a child of God, you would be stunned; you'd be speechless. I mean you have Jesus' own words that he personally chose you and he paid for you with his own blood on the cross. He tells you that you hear the voice of God while the vast majority of the world does not. He tells you you follow the Good Shepherd while the rest of the world either laughs at him, ignores him, or hates him; and you have God's own word that he protects you so that the evil one can't touch you. Folks, billion dollar lottery winners, they've got nothing on us. We won the greatest prize the universe has ever known and we've never even bought a ticket. We did nothing to deserve this. And we each have

our lifetimes to show our gratitude. As John says in Revelation 1:5: *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

Let's pray.

Father, I just thank you that he who is born of God protects us and the evil one cannot touch us because of what he has done, because of the protection that we enjoy from the one who has bought and paid for us, for the one who owns us and calls us his sheep.

Father, what an incredible gift we have received. I thank you, I praise you for it. And I pray you would give us the ability to share that gift with others, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.